

Br. 23.

A DEVOUT OBSERVANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN
SABBATH RECOMMENDED:

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

A N D

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

OF THE

REVEREND THE VICE-CHANCELLOR
AND HEADS OF HOUSES.

By S. GLASSE, D.D. F.R.S. *KL*
AND CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

L O N D O N:

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MDCCLXXXI.

TO THE
Reverend the VICE-CHANCELLOR,
AND THE OTHER

HEADS of HOUSES in OXFORD.

GENTLEMEN,

AT a time when the profanation of the Sabbath has called forth the attention of our Legislators, it appears to be the duty of every well-wisher to the cause which they have in hand, to bear his testimony, however inconsiderable, to the wisdom and propriety of their endeavours. And therefore, not discouraged by much more able performances in the same way, I venture, under the sanction of that request,

quest, with which you honoured me at the time when this plain sermon was preached, thus publicly to declare my sentiments, concerning the religious observance of the Christian Sabbath.

You could have no other motive for doing me so much honour, but an idea, that a discourse on this subject might be of some service to the cause of Christianity at large, and perhaps to the younger part of the University in particular.

If the publication of it should answer any good purpose whatsoever, it will give the truest satisfaction to

Gentlemen,

Your respectful and very
obedient humble servant,

Greenford,
May 5, 1781.

SAM. GLASSE.

S E R M O N, &c

LEVIT. xix. 30.

*Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my
Sanctuary: I am the LORD.*

IT argues a disposition very friendly to religion, when its professors consider it as a point of duty to treat every thing relating to it with becoming reverence. Whether any favourable conclusions may be drawn from the practice of modern Christians in this respect, is a subject upon which I do not think it necessary to enter at present. I had rather direct your thoughts to the consideration of the duty, which the text enjoins, and which it enforces by that solemn admonition,

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nition,

nition, *I am the LORD*: I am that jealous GOD, who cannot behold my sanctuary dishonoured, or my holy day profaned, with an eye of indifference or disregard.

Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary: I am the LORD.

Let us listen to the voice of our Creator, appearing, as it were, in person, to vindicate the honour of his own institutions; and making himself known to us by that great name, JEHOVAH, which all the host of heaven with the profoundest veneration adore.

The original institution of the Sabbath in Paradise — The reference to it in the fourth commandment, in which GOD calls to the remembrance* of his people that sacred ordinance of Heaven, requiring them to sanctify, in a peculiar manner, the day which he had set apart for himself. — The change which it hath undergone in the Christian dispensation, together with the reasons for that

* See Dr. Kennicott's excellent sermon on THE SABBATH, page 13.

change,

change, have all been so frequently made the subject of discourse, and must so often have engaged your own particular consideration, as to leave nothing new to be suggested by me on this head: my duty, on the present occasion, seems rather to remind you of what you have so often heard or read, and to stir up your minds by way of remembrance.

The words which I have chosen for this discourse, will lead me to shew, *when the Sabbath is duly kept*, or sanctified; and when it is profaned; *when the sanctuary is revered*, and when it is treated with contempt.

The end of *all* the commandments of God, is to make men holy in this life, in order to their eternal happiness in a better. But the expediency and necessity of *this* commandment, in particular, are founded on the experience of human weakness; which requires, that our attention should be frequently withdrawn from the objects of sense, and raised to those of a more sublime and heavenly nature. Insomuch, that it is very little to be doubted, that even the appearance

of religion amongst us, would soon be utterly lost, were it not for the injunctions and prohibitions of this commandment. Some indeed there are, (and God grant that their number may daily be increased!) who dare not oppose their own will to a positive command of God: who dare not *kick at the institutions of Heaven*, and treat them and their author with profane contempt. Many, I hope, are to be found, who *call the Sabbath a delight*; and welcome its return, as one of the most interesting and important days of their whole life. But, alas! the torrent hath too evidently taken a contrary course, and multitudes are carried down by its violence, against the dictates of the gospel, and even against the convictions of their own mind. Such is the prevalence of custom, when it unhappily coincides with our natural disinclination to that which is good.

But amidst the various sentiments which Christians (in *name* at least) allow themselves to entertain concerning this holy day; and amidst the various instances of profanation, which every where abound; many, as I have just now observed, I doubt not, are
to

to be found, who welcome the return of every Sabbath; not merely as a day of rest from ordinary concerns, but chiefly as a day set apart for a business of the most interesting and important nature: *This, saith the faithful servant of GOD, this is the day, which the LORD hath made; I will rejoice and be glad therein:* He does not think himself at liberty to welcome its return in the language of the sluggard, with "*A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep.*" On the contrary, reflecting on the importance of the work before him, he rises to his duty with a sprightliness only to be exceeded by that of the sun, when it goeth forth from the chambers of the morning, *rejoicing, as a giant, to run his course.*

His first attention we may suppose engaged by a general view of the duties of the following day. He considers the purposes for which it was appointed, and as far as he is concerned, he determines to render it conducive to the great design of his sanctification and growth in grace. He prepares himself for the public worship of GOD, by
previous

previous meditation ; and by prayer for grace to assist him in what he is about to perform.

And here I must, once for all, take the liberty to suppose such an observer of the Sabbath, as I would wish to propose to your imitation, to be a member of our own most pure and apostolical Church, which in its doctrines, in its government, and its services, we esteem to be most nearly conformed to the precepts of scripture, the directions of Christ, the practice of the Apostles, and of Christians in the first and purest ages of the Gospel.

We consider him, then, as constantly disposed and prepared to present his person and his prayers before the Throne of Grace, in that form and manner, which our Church prescribes, and which, it would be very needless in this place to undertake to prove, are both consistent with sound wisdom, and conducive to the advancement of true piety. He listens with attention to the *exhortation* with which the service opens ; he adopts and applies the language of humble *confession* which
succeeds

succeeds it; he hears, and thankfully accepts the gracious declaration of pardon and *absolution*, which the minister of God is empowered and commanded to pronounce to all that truly repent, believe in, and obey the Gospel. He approaches the mercy-seat with more than ordinary confidence, when he addresses it in *that form of words*, which infinite wisdom dictated on earth, and infinite mercy will accept in Heaven.

These he considers as a necessary introduction to the more enlivened employment of praise and thanksgiving, for which he is *then* best qualified, when he views himself as raised from the humiliating circumstances of one, that, without the Divine Favour, is *poor and miserable, and blind, and naked*: The melody therefore of the *Psalms* most properly succeeds, to lead him into a train of pleasing reflections on the mercy of God. After which, he is prepared to listen to God himself, vouchsafing to instruct him in the *lessons* of holy scripture. These he endeavours to receive in an *honest and good heart*, firmly resolved, through the aid of God's grace, to reduce the divine precepts into practice:
after

after which, his thanksgiving is renewed, and his voice is again attuned to the praises of God. Indeed this interchange of prayer, of reading the scriptures, and giving of thanks, may be considered as one of the many excellencies of our liturgy: and if the length of our service thus happily diversified, be a subject of complaint, the answer is, that the backwardness in worshippers to attend, has made it necessary to unite *two* or *three* services together. For in vain could we hope for their appearance as often as each separate service would require, where their attendance only on the *morning* and *evening* sacrifice is so difficult, if not impossible, to be obtained: nevertheless, the servant of God, whom we have been describing, never supposes the *Sabbath* to be kept *holy*, unless both the morning and evening service be frequented; he never can think himself excused, unless prevented by distance of situation, bodily infirmity, or other important and unavoidable circumstances. He well knows, that a peculiar reference is made in scripture to the *evening sacrifice*: and indeed it was very reasonable to require, that THE DAY, intended for God's honour and service,

service, should be begun and ended with God. It is a better proof, that we are not absolute unbelievers, than that we are altogether such as we ought to be, if we are contented with paying *half* the homage of a *seventh* day to HIM, in whose hands is every moment of our time, and at whose disposal is every blessing of our Lives. Compare this coldness of sentiment with the fervent complaints, and pious breathings of the Psalmist: *My soul, saith he, hath a desire and longing to enter into the Courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living GOD: one day in thy Courts, O LORD, is better than a thousand elsewhere: I had rather be a door-keeper, rather be admitted to the lowest service in the House of GOD, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.*

One circumstance of singular importance I have not yet mentioned, which I consider as essential to the due observance of the Sabbath; and that is, the reception of the holy communion, whenever it is administered. Far be it from any one to imagine, that a frequent celebration of it will lessen his reverence for this divine institution: be assured,

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that

that *they* have the truest reverence, both for the ordinance, and for him that appointed it, who most frequently attend it: far from disgusting with frequent use, it is the never-failing source of new satisfaction, and new delight. For, supposing (but by no means allowing) it to be barely commemorative of our Saviour's love; where is our gratitude and respect, in refusing this act of commemoration? But if we consider it to be, what it really is, an instrument of supplying us with spiritual strength and support, where is our regard for our own happiness and welfare, when we turn away from an holy ordinance so eminently conducive to both?

And now, the stated duties of *morning* and *evening* worship having been performed; and the holy communion whenever it is administered; having been duly received, a very important question occurs, In what manner is the remainder of the Sabbath to be spent? —I answer, we are never to forget that it is THE LORD'S DAY: and though I am not an advocate for puritanical sourness and severity, on this or any other day, I can by no means approve of finishing the day in such a manner,

ner, as to destroy all the effects of our religious observances in the former part of it. Much less can I reflect, without abhorrence, on those libertine assemblies, which have awakened the attention of the legislature, and which we have so much reason to hope will be speedily and effectually suppressed. Holy meditation and religious converse, far different from the perverse *disputings* of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth;—visiting the poor and needy—the promotion of peace, and acts of mercy and benevolence, will most properly fill up the remaining space; and I will venture to add, will lay a sure foundation of complacency and satisfaction.

Should we attend the devout observer of the Sabbath to his closet in the evening, we should there behold him reviewing the transactions of the preceding day, recalling to his mind the instructions which he has received, *certainly* from the word of God; and perhaps from some explanation of it, by the mouth of his minister. And although this *latter* may not perhaps always afford him much useful matter of reflection, yet the

word of God is *quick and powerful*, and abundantly *profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*; it is, in short, an inexhaustible treasure of wisdom, and comfort, and knowledge.

On this point, I hope I may be permitted to observe, that no argument respecting the supposed abilities of the preacher, can with propriety be urged, as an excuse for absenting ourselves from the instructions to be delivered from the pulpit in this place: it is no more than justice to the persons who have the direction of this matter, to conclude, that the best provision is made, which the nature of circumstances will allow: and if your preacher hath neither wit, nor words, nor eloquence to engage your attention, or to captivate your affections, yet must it be remembered, that the designs of Providence are sometimes accomplished by instruments apparently inadequate; and that great is the prevalence of truth, even where outward embellishments are wanting. One thing is certain, that no condition, with respect to the preacher, is annexed to that statute, which

which requires your attendance at every sermon to be preached; and even your continuance in hearing, from the beginning to the end of it: and I am persuaded, that the conscientious observer of this statute will feel no small satisfaction from having discharged *his* duty, however he may have failed of the entertainment which he wished for, or the improvement which he sought.

Thus far I have endeavoured to exhibit to your view the picture of the religious observer of the Sabbath: we have attended him through the whole course of his religious exercises, and may venture to hope, that his prayers and his alms, his devotion and charity are ascended to Heaven, and will be had in remembrance before God. Were I now to describe the conduct of the profaner of it, I could only give you the direct contrast. Instead of the LORD's day, he fancies it to be *his own* day, to be employed according to his own natural propensity, either in sloth and indolence, under the notion of a day of rest, or in visits, journies, or impertinent, not to say, unholy amusements, under the idea of a day of liberty, to gratify himself in any manner.

manner that he pleases. Even from the highest to the lowest order of men, it is too generally considered, as the day, which we have an uncontrollable right to dispose of for ourselves. The politician feels himself at liberty to relax his attention to the public concerns: the merchant, by removing from the scene and hurry of business, endeavours to forget his anxiety: the husbandman withdraws his hand from the plough: and the mechanic suspends his daily labour: but which of these accounts it a day to be *therefore* withdrawn from the world, that it may be consecrated unto God? On some it hangs heavy, like a burthen grievous to be borne; whilst others welcome its return as a day of leisure for dissipation, riot, and excess. To the one it is merely the Sabbath of the ox or the ass; while to the other, it is a day of more than ordinary defiance both of divine and human laws.—But, we beseech thee, *visit us not for these things, O LORD GOD of Hosts, be not avenged we beseech thee, on such profaneness as this.*

The latter part of the text would lead me to shew, *when* the sanctuary is duly revered,

verenced, and *when* it is treated with contempt. But this hath already fallen under consideration, in our attendance on the devout Christian to the House of God, at every return of the Sabbath. *He* certainly hath the truest reverence for the Temple and the Altar, who visiteth *both* most frequently and most devoutly: who hastens *early* to the service, esteeming no part of it to be superfluous or unnecessary; and who, whenever he approaches this holy place, is all devotion in his prayers, all attention in hearing, all gratitude and love in his praises to God: who comes not hither, in compliance with form and custom, or to avoid the censures of others; who bestows not his service *grudgingly*, or *of necessity*, well knowing that God *loveth a chearful giver*; but, on the contrary, esteems it his *honour*, his *privilege*, and his *delight*, to present himself before God: who dares not adopt a levity of behaviour in this hallowed place, neither reconcileable with piety nor common sense, but addresses the Majesty of Heaven with a soul as animated, with an attention as awakened, with affections as warm, and with a heart as devoutly fixed upon God, as the frailty of his nature will

will permit. Nor let the pious behaviour which he here exhibits be misconstrued into enthusiastic rapture, or the regard which he pays to the sanctuary of GOD, be termed by a facetious conceit, “ an idolatrous veneration of stone walls.” He that reverenceth the altar, reverenceth the GOD to whom all things thereon are dedicated: and he that regardeth the temple of the LORD, regardeth him that dwelleth therein, even the GOD *that beareth prayer, unto whom every knee should bow, and every tongue should give praise.*

Such are the sacrifices which a GOD of mercy will accept and reward, through the merits of His Blessed Son: let us then remember, that *the LORD hath GIVEN us the Sabbath*, and let us not despise both the Giver and the gift. Let us not by a wilful negligence, reduce ourselves to the sad condition of our brethren in another part of the world, whose temples are defiled, and whose altars are thrown down, and whose daily service is abolished. Rather let us unfeignedly rejoice in every opportunity of a blessed intercourse with our Maker; and let it be considered as a foretaste of that blessed employment

ment, in which we hope to be engaged to all eternity ; when, with Angels and Arch-angels, amidst the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven, in the society of just men made perfect, and in the presence of God, the Judge of all, we shall give glory, and honour, and thanksgiving, and praise to him that sitteth on the throne ; to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the eternal Spirit, the sanctifier of the children of God.

To conclude: I have chosen this subject for your particular consideration at this time, because I look upon the profanation of the Sabbath, to be one of our prevailing national sins : and certainly a reformation of manners in this, or any other respect, can never be more seasonably begun, than when all our hopes of national prosperity depend on the favour and protection of the LORD of hosts. This prosperity can by nothing be so effectually secured, as by an increase of national piety : nor can a reformation so much wanted, and so ardently desired, be any where begun to such advantage, or pursued with such

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hope of success, as in this place. If the *sons of the prophets* should be found regardless of their duty, by what arguments should we prevail with the ignorant and vulgar to attend to it? If precept and example, instruction and discipline, lose their influence in our religious seminaries, *actum est de republicâ, actum est de veritate christianâ*; if the *still small voice* of religion is not attended to in these peaceful retreats, in vain must we expect it will be heard, in the busy circle of the sons of pleasure: it has been our distinguished honour, to stand forth among the foremost, and among the most liberal supporters of the *civil* establishment at this critical period: let it also be our pride to be considered as the advocates, the friends, and patrons of our *religious* constitution; *defenders* of its doctrines, *abettors* of its discipline, *confessors* of its purity; and, if the providence of God should call us to it, *martyrs* for its sake.

May it please God, therefore, of his infinite mercy, to pour his grace into our hearts, and increase in them the true knowledge, and fear, and love of his holy name;
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that our imperfect services on earth, may be graciously accepted in his sight, through Jesus Christ our LORD.

To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, three persons, and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all glory and honour and praise, world without end. Amen

F I N I S.



